

SPECIAL EDITION

THE SPIRIT OF THE TEDDY BEAR: BEYOND OPINIONS

by Richard E. Tremblay

Our children deserve the best care our society can provide, care that is grounded in a solid knowledge of child development. This idea was the cornerstone of our recent forum, *Linking Research Policy and Practice: Working Together for Children and Youth*, featured in this edition of the Bulletin. Of course this is a well accepted idea. But we often forget that it has deep roots.



Drs Richard E. Tremblay and Judith Maxwell at the Forum

In 1909, the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, endorsed by President Theodore ("Teddy") Roosevelt, entrenched the principle of caring for children regardless of their social circumstances. In a letter to the Senate and House of Representatives, Roosevelt underscored the magnitude of the event: "To this conference there came from nearly every State of the Union men and women actively engaged in the care of dependent children..."

The President, who inspired the Teddy bear, held that the well-being of a nation depended on the care of its children. After all, he reasoned, each child could either live as an enlightened, productive citizen, or (if neglected and exploited) could contribute to the destruction, ignorance and moral decay of society. "The interests of the nation are involved in the

welfare of this army of children no less than in our great material affairs."

At the close of the seminal White House Conference, a series of declarations laid the main planks in a forward-looking childcare program. All of the declarations were adopted, "without dissenting vote and with every demonstration of hearty approval on the part of all present." At last, each community would have a matrix by which to measure its existing services and methods and a standard for developing practices and legislation.

Roosevelt was emphatic: "If given full effect by the proper agencies, existing methods and practices in almost every community would be profoundly and advantageously modified." Legislation and social welfare practices would see sweeping changes in the years to come.


So it was that at the dawn of the 20th century, the key tenets of 21st century child welfare were already well defined: children represent the future of a nation; human, social and material capital are intrinsically linked; prevention, education, policy and legislation form the backbone of services and community involvement; and our programs, best practices and evaluation methods must be revised on an ongoing basis. Not only did the delegates at the White House Conference breathe life into these ideas, but within two days an agreement was reached on a "standard of accepted opinion."

Almost a century after Roosevelt's efforts, the Canadian federal government created the Centres for Excellence (COE) for Children's Well-Being. The five-year mandate of the COE is to "ensure that advanced knowledge is disseminated more broadly among families, community-

based organizations, educators, health professionals and government decision-makers."

Roosevelt was especially mindful of the importance of reliable knowledge. He wrote, "There are few things more vital to the welfare of the nation than accurate and *dependable knowledge* of the best methods of dealing with children." Without such information, he warned, "each community is left to work out its own problem with-

out being able to learn of and profit by the success or failure of other communities."

The past century has clearly shown that it is more difficult to generate that *dependable knowledge* than to reach consensus on opinions. In the remaining four years of our mandate at the CEECD we will share available knowledge to help break down barriers between stakeholders in communities across the country. 

400 DELEGATES, 32 WORKSHOPS AND 5 PLENARY SESSIONS

November 22 to 24, 2001
Ottawa

***Linking Research to Policy and Practice: Working Together for Children and Youth* was the theme of the forum co-hosted by the Canadian Child Care Federation, the Centre of Excellence on Early Childhood Development, the Canadian School Boards Association and Health Canada.**

The forum attracted delegates from a

broad range of sectors across Canada: academe (colleges and universities), government (federal, provincial and territorial), non-profit organizations (over 50 different groups) and front-line personnel from health, social services, education and early childhood development learning and care.

Almost 400 delegates attended 32 workshops and five plenary presentations, including one on the work of the five Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being. And judging from the comments received from participants, the conference appears to have been a resounding success:

"I have definitely had my interest in the Centres of Excellence sparked!"

"I can't wait to see what the next four years bring!"

"An exceptional learning experience."

"A well organized, enjoyable and informative conference. Hope to attend another one some day. Thank you!"

by Anne Maxwell



Speaker Ken Dryden, President and General Manager of the Toronto Maple Leafs and former Ontario Youth Commissioner

FORGING NEW LINKS

By Liz Warwick

What does it mean for researchers, policy makers and practitioners to work together for the optimal health and well-being of children? How can each group share their knowledge and then integrate each other's findings in a way that benefits children? These questions were the focal points of the Forum.

Opening the conference, the Honourable Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Secretary of State (Children and Youth) outlined a national goal: to make Canada the best country for raising children. "We plan to do that by ensuring that babies are born healthy, that young children are well cared for and ready to learn when they enter school and that youth are equipped with the skills and confidence they need to handle the challenges of the 21st century," said Blondin-Andrew.

A tall order and one that keynote speaker Daniel P. Keating, Director of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research's Program in Human Development, suggested would only be achieved by forging new links between three key areas. "It is the linkages between research, policy and practice that are absolutely essential," said Keating. "We all have to make an enhanced commitment to collaborative innovation. We need to move together to try to break down the barriers and to understand each other in order to have a dialogue."

An important first step in creating that dialogue, Keating added, is to ask the question: what is the current scientific context for healthy child development? Keating noted that scientific research provides an essential "touchstone" or objective picture for understanding children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Without such a picture, "everyone's opinion is more or less equal to anyone else's and everything is more or less true. But there are circumstances that are objectively bad for children," said Keating.

To understand children's developmental pathways, researchers need to

examine both individual lives as well as the general population. An individual's development sheds light on the events and contexts that shape a person, explained Keating. "What are the things that actually matter as they go through their life course? What are the things that happen early on that have an impact later in life?" At the same time, it is critical to understand how populations function to see the larger trends, he added. "We need to think about the broad social context.



Daniel P. Keating, Director of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and the CIAR Program in Human Development

We very often get caught up in the local controversies and the local issues. These are very important for making specific decisions about policy and practice but in order to understand the details, we must put them in a broader context."

Keating also suggested that researchers, policy makers and practitioners need to work together to help society as a whole grasp why the developmental health of children is so vital. In the knowledge-based society of the 21st century, "prosperity will depend on innovation. And innovation is a human resource. If we don't sufficiently attend to developing the resource by investing in child development and youth, the odds of 'disinvesting' ourselves in terms of a faltering economy is a very serious risk." By forging links and creating collaborative knowledge-building, researchers, policy makers and practitioners can develop a learning society, where



The Honourable Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Secretary of State (Children and Youth)

innovation is a key value and citizens are actively engaged with their communities and world.

However, speaker Judith Maxwell, president of the Canadian Policy Research Networks, warned the conference audience that the knowledge transfer process is not easy. "There is no simple, direct route from research to policy to practice. In fact, it's a messy, chaotic process of transfer." Part of the problem lies in a serious clash between two value para-

institutions play in securing optimal development. "Each paradigm has its own strengths and weaknesses but we need both. Each paradigm is incomplete on its own. We can't fulfill the needs of family and children without a mix of the two."

Maxwell also suggested that knowledge transfer could be facilitated if researchers and policy makers had a better understanding of each other's needs and ways of working. "Research takes a long time to gestate while policy analysts don't have time to wait. Researchers don't always ask: 'What kind of information do policy makers need to know?'" And what policy makers need to know today is what works. "There are, however, three key elements in ensuring that the knowledge transfer takes place and that new policies and practices come into existence, explained Maxwell. "You need someone at the political level who has created a demand for the knowledge and who has expressed a willingness



From left to right : Jenna Hall, Health Canada; Darren Walter Lezubski, Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth - Centred Prairie Communities; Richard E. Tremblay, Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development; Nico Trocmé, Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare; Dan Breault, Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement; Julia T. O'Sullivan and Mark Howe, Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs; Lanny Jimenez, Barb McIntosh and Stoney McCart, Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement.

digms in the policy realm, added Maxwell. Policy makers tend to embrace either a family responsibility model, which places an emphasis on the role of the family in healthy child development or the model of "investing in children," which emphasizes the role governments and other

to act on that knowledge." The next step is the provision of the required information: "Tell me what I need to know." Part of what we need to know is how effective current programs and policies have been in creating and nurturing healthy development

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YOUR LINK TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

in children. "Sustained evaluation can give blindingly clear evidence about what works," Maxwell noted.

Lastly, researchers, policy makers and practitioners must realize that there is always a window of opportunity. "This is the moment when the stars are aligned and point in a direction that leads to action. It's the political and economic forces that create the possibility for change."

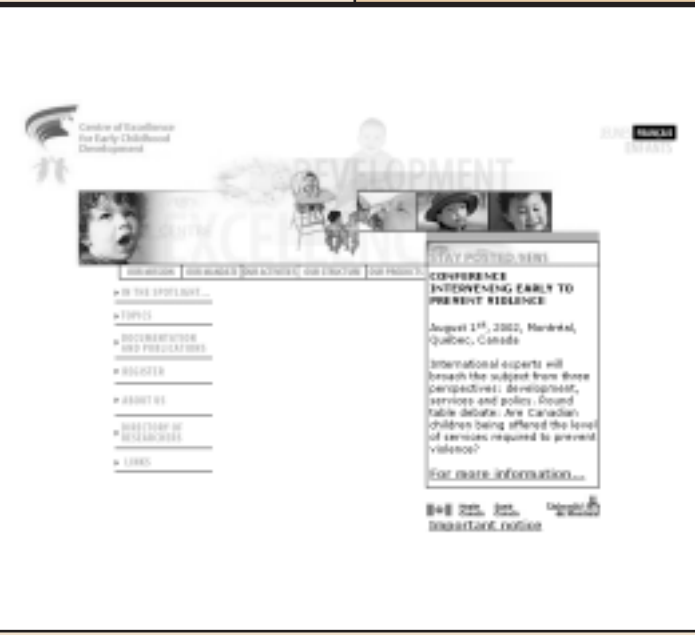
Without a serious, long-term effort to create links, real change is unlikely to occur, concluded Maxwell. "Carry on your steady progress in knowledge creation, but always be ready to recycle what you know. Always link your results to the new and emerging [policy] agendas. Keep hammering away and let your research show us what works. Your job is to create the linking logic that breaks through the values' conflict. Research can't do it alone but policy makers can't do it without you," she urged.

Speaker Ken Dryden, President and General Manager of the Toronto Maple Leafs and former Ontario Youth Commissioner, reiterated the need for reliable information on children's development. Dryden, who has spent many hours working with and for children, argued that there is a *will* to improve conditions for our children, but the *way* to do it is the real issue. "We put a program into place and every program it seems works. So why aren't our children doing better?" he asked. We need to know how Canadian children are doing compared with children in other countries.

Cherry Kingsley, a survivor of child sexual exploitation and IV drug use, closed the conference by urging society to make children's health development (in all its dimensions) a key priority. "We need research, policy and practice to be the sparks for opportunity and a chance for growth for young people," she said. "We need to make a real, lasting, meaningful impact in their lives." 🦋

The CEECD Web site is born! Visit our English Web site at www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca. Its French sister site can be found at www.excellence-jeunesenfants.ca.

Both sites will provide the best in reliable information on early childhood development and a window on the services and policies that are making an impact in the field. An indispensable tool for service planners,



Visit the English version of our site at www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca or the French version at www.excellence-jeunesenfants.ca.

childcare workers, teachers, social workers, medical professionals, parents and political decision-makers.

Topics
Articles by leading international experts focus on various topics from three perspectives: child development, services and policies. The *Topics* section also includes peer reactions to the articles presented and a highly accessible synopsis of the most recent findings on each topic. The CEECD's contributing authors provide an ongoing analysis of how each topic affects the social and emotional development of young children.

Directory of Researchers
Looking for a Canadian specialist in early childhood development? You've come to the right place! Our search engine will soon be available for searches by subject or by province to find the specialist you need. Each researcher's résumé and his or her ten most recent publications will be posted in the directory.

In the Spotlight
In the Spotlight will showcase the best in studies on the social and emotional development of young children, published in top scientific journals. A summary of each study provides salient information at a glance.



News Flash
Our news flashes will keep you updated on early childhood conferences, symposiums and workshops, hosted by the CEECD and other organisations.

Register Now
To receive regular notices regarding our work, publications and events, just fill out the registration form provided on the site. The information you provide is confidential and you can ask to have your name removed from our mailing list at any time.

Documentation and Publications
Links to all of the CEECD's yearly publications can be accessed through our site: including quarterly bulletins, bibliography of the topics addressed by the Centre's affiliated experts, seminar documents and more. 🦋

CONFERENCE: EARLY CHILDHOOD AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

August 1, 2002, Montreal, Quebec

Early Childhood and Violence Prevention is a conference that is intended for Canadian policy makers, service planners and providers. Our focus will be on aggression in young children and the need for early intervention in order to prevent violence.

International experts will address the subject from three perspectives: development, services and policy. A round table discussion will enlist the wide-ranging expertise of all our participants. The question for discussion: Are we providing Canadian children with an adequate level of basic services to prevent violence?

The conference will take place at McGill University in Montreal. It will be organized by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, chaired by Richard E. Tremblay. The International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA) will also hold a conference at McGill University from July 28

to 31, 2002. For more information on the ISRA conference, see their Web page : www.israsociety.com/meetings.html. More information on the *Early Childhood and Violence Prevention* conference will be available in the



coming months at www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca. Register online to join our mailing list for regular updates on related events. 🦋

A VOICE FOR CITIZENS

The CITIZEN'S FORUM is a group of people representing social workers and health care and education professionals from organizations working with young children and their families. Service planners and child advocacy groups also participate in the forum.

The Forum's mandate is to provide feedback on products distrib-

uted by the Centre and to advise on dissemination strategies. It provides a venue where various public stakeholders can apprise the Centre of their current subjects of interest and their own means of disseminating information.

This ongoing dialogue aids the Centre in determining how best to disseminate information to its various audiences. 🦋



The *Bulletin* is a quarterly publication of the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (CEECD).

The CEECD surveys and synthesizes leading scientific work on social and emotional development of young children and disseminates this information to planners, providers of public and community services and policy makers. We also make recommendations on services that, if established, would support optimal development in young children.

The CEECD's partners include Health Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, Université de Montréal, Dalhousie University IWK Health Centre, Queen's University, University of British Columbia, Atikamekw National Council, Canadian Child Care Federation, Canadian Paediatric Society, Canadian Institute of Child Health, Centre de Psycho-Éducation du Québec and Institut national de santé publique du Québec.

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